population over 500 are yet to be provided with letter box facility as on 31-3-94. The target is to cover these villages in the current year. In other areas, letter boxes are being provided in central locations, including Railway Stations and S. T. Stands, in pursuance of the stated principles, except for these cases where density of population, public requirements or objection by civil authorities warrant relaxation of these norms.

Tender for Telecom Service

1940. SHRI ASHOK MITRA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether as reported in the press a decision has been taken to prohibit public sector telecommunications agencies, operating under the auspices of both the Union and State Governments from participating in the tenders about to be floated for telecommunications services;

(b) if so, the rationale for taking such a decision; and

(c) the likely consequences for the domestic communications industry on account of Government's decision?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) to (c) Due to resource constraints under the new Telecom Policy the work of expansion and upgradation of the telecom facilities in the country is envisaged to be supplemented by the private sector. In the case of public sector, it is felt that resource prioritisation demands that the concentrate in their respective areas of operations with a view to optimising both the utilisation of the scarce resources of the Government as well as their performance in the areas assigned to them.

Computerisation of Post Offices in the Country

1941. SHRI SARADA MOHANTY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken steps to computerise the Post Offices in the country;

(b) if so, the number of Post Offices that have been computerised so far;

(c) whether any target date has been fixed to computerise all the Post Offices in the country;

(d) if so, the details therof; and

(e) the steps taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) The Department's programme of modernising the postal service during the current year lays emphasis on improving counter services and front office activities in Post Offices. This is being achieved through computer based counter machines which provide all postal services including savings bank functions, through a single window and ensure speedy, efficient and responsive service to the customer.

(b) About 510 Post Offices in different parts of the country have been provided with computer based counter machines so far.

(c) to (e) No, Sir. During the current Plan period computer based counter machines are being provided selectively to the more important and busy Post Offices where introduction of these machines will help to improve the efficiency of service to the customer. With the availibility of resources, a total of 5000 computer based counter machines are planned for introduction during the VIIIth Plan period. More than 1000 counter machines have been installed in different Post Offices.

More than 800 more counter machines are in different stages of installation in Post Offices all over the country.

Proposal to set up Modern Telephone Exchanges

1942. SHRI SARADA MOHANTY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a proposal to set up some modern telephone exchanges during Eighth Plan;

(b) if so, the number of Modern Telephone Exchanges proposed to be set up and actually set-up so far; and

(c) the details thereof, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The 8th five year plan of the DOT envisages addition of 93 lakh lines of net switching capacity. The actual number of the telephone exchanges to be set up is a function of technology registered demand etc. The location-wise expansion programme is planned on year to year basis depending on the availability of exchange capacity and other resources. Upto 31-10-94 34,537 lakh net Sw. Capacity has been provided.

(c) The state wise addition of switching capacity during 9th five year plan period and achievement during 1-4-94 to 31-10-94 are given in the enclosed statement.